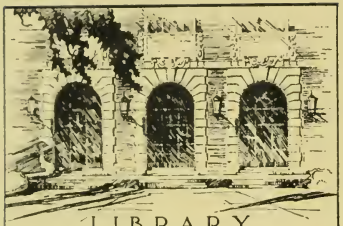

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THE MISSIONS TO THE ABORIGINAL INDIANS IN THE DIOCESE OF GUIANA.

AN ADDRESS

DELIVERED AT A MISSIONARY SERVICE, HELD AT THE CLOSE OF THE GUIANA DIOCESAN SYNOD,

IN THE

PRO-CATHEDRAL,

ON

THURSDAY EVENING, SEPTR. 16, 1880,

BY

THE REV. THOS. FARRAR,

MEMBER OF THE DIOCESAN COUNCIL, RECTOR OF S. PAUL'S, AND CHAPLAIN TO THE BISHOP OF BARBADOS, &c.

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PUBLISHED BY REQUEST.

DEMERARA:

PRINTED AT BALDWIN & CO.'S, WATER STREET, GEORGETOWN.

1880.

AN ADDRESS.

My Christian Friends,

I have been requested to address a few words to you this evening on the Missions to the Aboriginal Indians of this Diocese.

It is a subject so vast, and so important, that the whole time set apart for this gathering would fail to tell the tale as it should be told. It is a subject of thrilling interest at all times, for young men and maidens, old men and children; but at the present it is especially so, coming as it does with credentials hardly ever seen, and with a freshness, and a power that are simply irresistible. For God has literally created a new thing in the earth,—*Heathens sending a deputation over hill, and dale, and cataract and sea, to beg for Christian teachers to instruct, and to shew them the light of the Glorious Gospel of the Son of God.*

The story was a very different one, when some 40 years ago, our Bishop (whom God preserve,) entered upon his Bishoprick. Then we had two Missions, now we have some forty stations. Then, that grand old man, William Henry Brett, the very Prince of Missionaries, and a host in himself, (and who only left our shores a few months ago) was but a stripling in years and in work. Now his is a name that, in this Diocese at least, ought to be, must be, had in pious memory for generations to come.

Then, as I have just said, we had, what, thank God, we still have, *and what we all most earnestly pray we may long have spared to us*, a Bishop who has lived to be the Father of the Anglican Communion, and who through all these years of his Episcopate has pioneered, and guarded,

and guided, these Missions with a Father's tender care. And so it has come to pass that the two Missions have increased twenty-fold. And the indian in his wanderings can now always find a Christian home and welcome in the Mission stations which are established at convenient distances, and he can travel with a safety unknown, undreamt of, in days gone by, to and from his far off home in the primeval forests of this South American Continent.

Forty years ago was, literally, the day of small things. For five long, dreary, weary years did Mr. Brett live, and work, and wait, in his solitude. His residence was one of three ruinous huts; tiger-cats and snakes were the most frequent companions of his solitude. And then his youth, his poverty, his ill health, (so ill that, at last, it forced him to retire altogether for a time, his want of success,) *all these things were most powerfully against him in his special work*, and were more than enough to break down ordinary faith. But Mr. Brett was no mere carpet-slipper Missionary, who measured his work by his income and personal comforts, or men's praise of him. Neither did he measure God's blessing by the abundance of outward success and of popularity. Like all true heroes he could wait, and work on quietly. And so, if it did not appear to be God's will that he should make converts in the way of his own choosing, he could, at least, sow the seed with no unsparing hand, and God could water and bless in His own good time and way, and the harvest was sure,—forty, fifty, a hundred fold, in this life present, and, at the end of all, life everlasting for himself and the countless other souls whom he should win to Christ.

The several dialects of the indians Mr. Brett reduced to an intelligible system; thus enabling every one in the dialect wherein he was born to understand and to speak the wonderful works of God.

The generation of work performed by Mr. Brett (as has been well said by the learned and pious Author of "Under His Banner,") represents more of 'peril, toil, and pain,' than are to be found in many of the semi-mythical labours

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which have conferred on the doers of them the honour of canonisation. And, thank God, we have others now as good as he: men who are pushing on the work in a way that will make the old man's heart leap for joy, and awaken him to renewed life, when the tale is wafted homeward to him.

But I must speak especially of the Indian Missions in the Essequibo and Mazaruni Rivers, as I think their history will best give you an insight into the doings of Missions generally.

The Church Missionary Society worked these missions for some years, and apparently, with considerable success. But when this Society withdrew its aid the whole work seemed as suddenly and as completely to collapse. And this, in my humble judgment, may be easily accounted for. The Indian convert had been treated too much like a hot-house plant; *everything*, in a worldly point of view, had been done for him, *to the extreme*. It was *leading strings* from first to last. The child was literally never weaned until it had grown to man's estate, and then the process was so summary that it had the appearance more of desertion than a necessary lesson of self-help. And so the work ended, as all defective teaching of spoilt children can only end. Still, the failure teaches us a valuable lesson if only we are prepared to read it aright.

In 1865 these Missions were reduced to a remnant, and I-CHABOD seemed to be written over the once flourishing *Bartica Grove*. The Indians had retired, and their place was occupied by a people whose example did not seem to attract them.

A site for a new Mission was chosen in 1868 on a hill in the Mazaruni river; and, until the Church was sufficiently advanced, one man gave up his Benab every Sunday for the Clergyman to hold Service in.

The indians were made to understand from the very first, that *no debt would be incurred, and that the completion of the new Church and Mission premises, would entirely depend on their own united efforts.*

The first intention was to erect a Church on the most primitive principle,—putting the posts in the ground and framing the whole as an ordinary indian dwelling. But when the site had been cleared it was discovered to be on a solid rock. Nothing daunted, however, the indians at once set to work and cut, not only a good frame, but also additional wood for sale, to enable them to pay a local carpenter to put the frame together, and so one whole year was spent.

During the second year, crab-wood boards for the floor were prepared and laid down in the rough, unplaned and unnailed.

During the third year the floor was properly laid, and a shingled roof was added to the Church,

And during the fourth year the sides and windows were added and ; to crown all, a widow woman, (and by no means a rich one) erected at her sole cost, a neat little chancel.

The indians in their four years of church building had learnt another important lesson,—a tax of four logs of crab-wood, yearly, was willingly paid by the heads of each family. This was sawn up into boards ; some of which were used for Mission purposes, and the rest sold for the general benefit of the Mission, erecting teacher's residence, providing coffins for the dead, &c , &c.

It may interest some of you to know that every bit of crab-wood in S. Philip's Church in this city, was furnished by these Missions.

S. Edward's, Mesopotamia, at the junction of the Mazaruni and Cuyuni rivers, had no sooner sprung up into life than another in the lower Essequebo, called *Macedonia* as suddenly appeared. And this, again, was followed by a third station in the higher Essequebo at a place named *Thessalonica.* And each station with its own Chapel-school and resident Catechist. And what is pleasant to add, the old Bartica Grove Mission, seemed also to have its share in the renewed life.

And, as a man seldom supports what he does not value,

perhaps the following statement may prove, to practical people, that these indians were no believers in mere lip service. If money, then, is any test, they stand the test most nobly :—

(1.) In $5\frac{1}{2}$ years *S. Edward's* Mission raised for Church purposes $4,020.

(2.) In $4\frac{1}{2}$ years *Macedonia* raised $1,320

(3.) In 3 years *Thessalonica* raised $712—in all $6,052 or £1,260 16s. 4d. And remember, raised by a people very little suspected of either the ability or the willingness so to come *to the help of the Lord against the mighty.* *

But there is yet another point from which we may view this pleasing picture.

(1.) *S. Edward's*, since its formation, has subscribed to the *Guiana Diocesan Church Society* $613.

(2.) *Macedonia* has subscribed to the same Society $218.

(3.) And *Thessalonica* has subscribed to the same Society $187.

In all, $1,018, or £19 5s. 8d. *per annum.* †
And, you must all have read, in a recent number of the *Dawn of Day*, of the *Pomeroon* indians (under the superintendence of the Rev. W. Heard) sending a church collection of $20 to their poor creole brethren at Hackney.

But now notice this. S. Edward's Mission was no sooner completed than its hour of trial came, and it appeared to come to sudden ruin. A white Catechist who had considerable influence, persuaded the indians that their clergyman was only intent on making personal gain out of them—*an old device of the devil this.* The Catechist's designs, however, were so transparent that he was dismissed at a moment's notice, and, with the help of Archdeacon Jones, who was fortunately on the spot at the time, cleared

* *Bartica Grove* Mission raised in eight years, from all sources some $4,000 in addition to the above.

† *Bartica Grove* Mission has contributed $907 to the G. D. C. Society since the formation of the Society.

off the Mission premises: but he took along with him every indian, big and little, man, woman, and child. A black man was installed in his room, and the indians were taught by the renegade white catechist to go to the church porch, during Service, singing, "*we wont have a nigger, we wont have a nigger.*" But the clergyman in charge was determined that they should have a "nigger." And that "nigger" they still have, and they now follow, and obey, and respect him as they never did, never could have done, the white catechist. The white catechist set off to this City in triumph for a leading Nonconformist minister, escorted by a whole tribe of indians in their batteaux, and with a flag flying in every boat! So, apparently, ended four years of most anxious work! But when the indians discovered that they would have to begin to build another place of worship, and other mission premises, they suddenly recollected the home they had so foolishly deserted, and that it had cost them four years to make; and then, one by one, they began quietly to return: and they have never since been tempted to wander into strange folds. Had they not, however, had a deeply *personal* interest in the Mission, they would never have returned. So much then for *self-help.* And so much too for the lower Essequibo Missions.

Now listen, for a few moments, to news from the higher Essequibo, and ask youselves, if it is possible that you can refuse *to come to the help of the Lord* in this matter, Church-men and Church-women as you all professedly are.

"Some two or three years ago an Indian family from the Upper Potaro River visited one of the missions on the Demerara for the purpose of learning something of the Gospel of Christ—a rumour of the glad tidings having reached them in their distant home. While at the 'Muritaro' mission, these persons were instructed and baptised, and on a subsequent visit the parents were confirmed and admitted to Holy Communion. On several occasions they have pleaded earnestly that a teacher should be sent to their village on the Potaro to instruct their

fellow countrymen: but the distance of their settlement from Town, and the want of means for the establishment of a mission, for some time prevented their cause being taken up. Two months ago, however, they appeared again at Muritaro, and insisted on the catechist, Mr. Lobertz, going back with them. M. Lobertz wisely came to Town for instructions, and arrangements were made at once for him to leave his mission and go with the men. His orders were to visit their settlement, find the number of people waiting to be taught, organize classes, and after a month's work to send a report to the Bishop of the exact position of affairs. On Tuesday 24th of August, a number of Indians arrived in Town with a report from Mr. Lobertz that after sixteen days travelling he had reached the settlement, that the ordinary population was about 200, but that within a week of his arrival nearly 800 people were congregated on the spot. There were a few Accawois, and a fair number of Macusis, but the majority were Paramunas—a tribe that has hitherto, furnished few, if any Christian converts. Mr. Lobertz immediately set to work: held classes for several hours day after day, and reports that, including some 200 children, he has 678 persons under preparation for baptism."

I know of nothing more distressing to earnest Churchmen than the thought that the glorious opportunities which, as it would seem, the Providence of God is now affording to the English Church, may, through our supiness, be lost. It needs no unusual discernment to see that the present is an opportunity which we may not throw away, except at our peril. We have the opportunity, *and we have the power*, if we will only exert it, and we have *(awful thought!)* the responsibility commensurate with the power. Such a work ought to be enough to elicit the most intense zeal, and the most earnest devotion of the noblest spirits among us. *Ought to be* did I say? *It has already done so.* William Edward Pierce, the Essequibo Missionary, a native of this Colony, has already left for the *Potaro* district, wife and children remaining behind to teach the indians residing near them, and to see,

as far as may be, to the spiritual wants of all during the Missionary's three month's absence. Surely an assembly like the one I am now addressing is not going to allow the present call for pressing pecuniary help to fall on stopped ears! Some, at least, of this vast multitude, will remember the bold, unselfish sacrifice of the Missioner who has left wife and children and home, for unknown perils and privations, and all for the love of souls whom Jesus died to win! Ah! my friends, we sometimes hear of people very willing to give their "*mite.*" Do they really know the meaning of their words? A "*mite*" can only mean *half* one's income. *She gave two mites, even ALL her living.* But God does not ask for this from you. If, however, every adult here would subscribe, or collect, one dollar a year for the purpose, there would be no difficulty in establishing a mission which would include not only the upper Potaro, but also its tributary the Curiebrong where a large number of Christians are already settled. Such a mission would affect the Indians to the furthest borders of the Colony.

God does, however tell us *to Honour Him with our substance and with the first fruits of all our increase.* And the old Jews, *understanding God to mean what He says, gave,* under *ordinary* circumstances *one-fifth* of his income to God, that is, *two* dollars out of every *ten.*

Compare this with our *ordinary* measure of giving as Christians, and *the polite bow* that fashionably dressed Christians sometimes think enough to offer to the God of Christians when the alms are being collected for Christ's poor, and Christ's Holy Catholic Church!

Never appear before the Lord empty; and, *Never give to God of that which costs you nothing,* says the Old Testament. *Why this waste?* asks the sham New Testament Christian when told in Christ's own words that, *It is more blessed to give than to receive.*

What is the reason that we give *so little* to Missions, and that little *so grudgingly?* Is it not because we *pray* so little, *believe* so little, *persevere* so little, *practice* so

little? *Believing prayer* is the animating soul of the Missionary cause. It is this which distinguishes it from every worldly combination, and elevates it far above the level of mere earthly institutions. But, remember, He Who has commanded us to *ask*, has also enjoined us to *seek*, evidently intending by such an injunction that all rational means should be united with devotion in every case where human agency is employed for God.

Answer me this question, and I have done. But not upon the principles of a mere worldly calculation which looks round upon a circle of luxurious enjoyments with the inquiry, *What can I spare and not be the poorer*, or, which values everything by a pecuniary standard? But, answer it *as a Christian*, with your eye fixed upon the Cross of our Redemption,—*What ought you to give* to help on the work for which I am now pleading?

It ought to be an encouragement to your liberality to know that what you lay out in so righteous a cause is only *lent unto the Lord*, and that, eventually, nothing shall be lost; that *in God's Bank* your offerings bear an interest that mortal eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither (had it not been revealed,) could man's heart have possibly conceived the reality. And yet it is as true as the Gospel,—*a hundred fold of spiritual blessings in this life, and in the world to come LIFE EVERLASTING!*

Can we, whose souls are lighted
With wisdom from on high,
Can we to men benighted
The Lamp of Life deny?
Salvation! Oh, Salvation!
The joyful sound proclaim,
Till each remotest nation
Has learnt Messiah's Name;
Till o'er our ransomed nature,
The Lamb for sinners slain,
Redeemer, King, Creator,
In bliss returns to reign.—Amen.